



**Marxist themes: Hegemony**

# Hegemony

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- How the ruling class maintains its power not only through coercion and force but also through shaping cultural meanings in a way that benefits its interests:

cultural sphere

worldview

common sense



# Louis Althusser

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- Ideology is actively constructed and reproduced through various social practices.
- Schools and the media transmit ruling class's ideology in a subtle and pervasive way.
- Ruled individuals identify with the ruling class's ideology, even if they are not explicitly aware of this.







# The scientific form of self-knowledge

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- The totality of contemporary human existence: Capitalism. Commerce dominates the entire human world.
- Human beings must regain control! From diagnosis to therapy.
- Science is the instrument and expression of human destiny. Fragmented reality and specialised sciences.



# The state-dependency of economic power

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- The nature of ruling class reproduction and class struggle, centred on the state apparatus as the principal source of appropriation.
- The centralized state grew without allowing for the development of an autonomous “privatized” space of accumulation.



# Who introduces new forms of production?

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- As we see below, despite the fact that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, new forms of capitalist production were slowly introduced in France —largely the result of economic and geopolitical competition with England— the French society that Marx described in the Eighteenth Brumaire remained shaped by class relations inherited from its precapitalist absolutist past.
- [T]he particular trajectory of class and state formation in pre- and post-revolutionary France is bound to tell us more about the highly protracted and contested nature of the passage to modernity in the nineteenth and twentieth century, both in Europe and elsewhere.



# Modern political projects

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- Both in France and Syria, modern political forms, such as the de-personalized public state and the nation, emerged in the absence of capitalist relations of appropriation as the result of material struggle over (access to) the state as the principal site of accumulation and ruling class reproduction.



# The peasant problem

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- This is not to say that French society had not attained a high level of commercial profit making and that wage labor was not a relatively widespread phenomenon — although it could not be compared to the situation in England at the same time. But the fact remains that economic modernization and growth in France was limited by the recurring weight of its “peasant problem.”



# Pressures and imperatives

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- Economic growth and commerce alone cannot be taken as sufficient proof of the generalization of capitalist social relations, which entails the systematic and sustained exposure of both owners and producers to the coercive pressure of the market and the submission of the process of production itself to the imperative of competition and innovation.



# Exploitation

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- This “purely economic” form of exploitation is tied to the particular reorganization of political power in advanced capitalist societies, which sees the separation and the maintenance of a boundary between a public sphere of politics and an autonomous and largely self-regulating economic sphere dominated by private property and the market.



# Economic relations

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- The definition of classes as, above all, economic agents—and the emergence of the modern concept of economy itself—is therefore historically bound to a specifically capitalist organization of political power. When applied to other contexts, it tends to impose on the analysis an anachronistic conception of what constitutes “economic” relations.

